

**ST. MATTHEW THE EVANGELIST
ANTIOCHIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH
JANUARY, 2024, NEWSLETTER
10383 ALBION ROAD, N. ROYALTON, OH 44133
P.O. Box 33183, N. Royalton, OH 44133**

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SATURDAY VESPERS—5 p.m.
SUNDAY MATINS—8:50 a.m. SUNDAY LITURGY—10 a.m.
**CONFESSION—after Vespers and during Sunday Matins & by
appointment.**

SPECIAL WORSHIP SERVICES IN JANUARY
**THE GREAT FEAST OF THEOPHANY (EPIPHANY), THE
CELEBRATION OF THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST, IS JANUARY 6TH. OUR
SCHEDULE:**

FRIDAY, JANUARY 5TH—Royal Hours, 9 a.m. (Services done in succession, unlike in Holy Week--Vesperal Divine Liturgy with the Great Blessing of Water, 6:30 p.m. *January 5th is a strict one-day fast.*

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6TH—**Theophany Day** Festal Matins, 9 a.m.; Divine Liturgy, 10 a.m.--Outdoor Blessing of Water after liturgy (a very short service) at the lake just south of our property.---Potluck meal right after outdoor ceremony.
Then home blessings will begin. Father Andrew will send a parish letter about the blessings.

HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY MEMORIAL PRAYERS FOR THE VICTIMS OF ABORTION—
This brief service will take place at the end of the liturgy on Sunday, January 21. January 22 is the date of the infamous Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision (1973—since overturned) that legalized abortion demand in the United States.

**PARISH ORGANIZATIONS, STUDY GROUPS, MINISTRY
TEAMS**

WEST BIBLE STUDY—Saturday, January 13, 6 pm at the church.
Studying Revelation.

WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUP—Tuesday, January 23, 10:30 a.m. All women welcome! The location is at Tara Reidy's, 274 Elmwood, Berea. For more info, call Sandy Tolbert, 440-773-9162. We're reading and discussing the book, "The Ascetic of Love."

SOUTH BIBLE STUDY—Tuesday, January 2 & 16, at Craig & Cindy George's, 9451 Sherwood Trail, Brecksville. All are welcome. The study will be on the first part of Genesis.

YOUNG ADULT BIBLE STUDY—Saturday, January 20, 6 p.m., at the church. Bible, food, fellowship—Beginning Gospel of St. Mark.

TEEN CLUB—Monthly meeting after liturgy, Sunday, January 28.

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP MEETING—After liturgy, Sunday, January 14.

MARTHA MINISTRIES IS NOW UNDERWAY—This is a ministry to provide meals for families in need of some help—new babies, illness, grieving, etc. If you can help, see/email/call Erin Musarra at 440-799-0838.

ST. HERMAN'S MINISTRY TEAM—Contact Deacon Basil, 440-665-3591 to help with our monthly meal serving at the shelter on Sunday, January 21.

MONTHLY DELIVERY OF FOOD, CLOTHING, ETC. TO HOMELESS ON STREETS OF DOWNTOWN CLEVELAND—Sunday, January 21. Alms box to help this outreach is near hall entrance.

HOMESCHOOL ENRICHMENT GROUP—It has resumed for the new school year. It will meet every Friday from 9:30-1:30 at St. Matthew's. For more info, contact Olivia at oharmon15@gmail.com or call (440)220-2624,

MOM AND TOTS GROUP—A new group for moms with babies and toddlers has begun. Will meet every Friday around 10:45 a.m. during Homeschool Enrichment Group. Contact Oliva at oharmon15@gmail.com or call (440)220-2624.

CHESS CLUB—Meets after church on January 7.

KNIT/CROCHET GROUP—January 20, 3:30. Do you knit or crochet? Would you like to learn? Call Lisa Bowden, 440-667-2767, if you have any questions.

SUNDAY SCHOOL IS GOING STRONG!

The number of children has gone up this year and it is an exciting time for our education program.

Thanks to all who are teaching and helping!

There are classes for from age 3 through 19---parents, please have your child attend this Sunday!

For more info, contact our co-superintendants----

Gail Malaniak 440-552-4586 gailmeen@gmail.com
Dawn Heatwole 304-995-7882 dkheatwole@yahoo.com

WELCOME TO OUR 3 NEW CATECHUMENS IN THE MONTHS OF NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER---

Michael Hutendre, Michael Asta, and Zachary Belts

OUR OTHER ONGOING CATECHUMENS ARE: Ryan Cobb, Jamie & Lucas Domonkos, Adam & Stevi & Liv James, Tiara Robinson, & D'Lorenzo Thomas.

We pray for them at each liturgy. Please pray for them also during the week as they prepare to enter the Orthodox Faith by either Baptism or Chrismation.

OUR CONDOLENCES TO ELAINE NASSAR AND HER FAMILY ON THE FALLING ASLEEP IN CHRIST ON OF HER HUSBAND, EMILE, ON NOVEMBER 17TH----May his memory be eternal!

CONGRATULATIONS FOR BABIES BORN IN NOVEMBER & DECEMBER---

- to Christian & Narmeen Morton on the birth of Nara Alyce
- to David & Alicia Mlakar on the birth of Luciana Dianne
- to Michael & Erin Musarra on the birth of Eleni Elizabeth

CONGRATULATIONS TO---

- David & Alicia Mlakar on the Churching of Luciana Dianne on December 24th.

CONGRATULATIONS TO---

- Subdeacon Samuel & Anya Harmon on the baptism of Solomia Bee on November 11th.
- George & Dima Kash on the baptism of Joseph George on November 25th.

PRISON MINISTRY

Introducing Our New Prison Ministry Initiative! We are excited to announce the formation of a specialized team to lead this vital mission. Those who feel called to participate and make a difference are warmly invited to get in touch with Vinny DeFilippo. You can reach Vinny via email at vdefilippo@neo.rr.com or by phone at 330-352-6678. Stay tuned for more information regarding an upcoming meeting this January where we will outline the forthcoming steps and discuss our collaborative journey ahead.

GIFTS FOR JESUS OFFERING---- If you have not yet given to our annual special Christmas offering---“Gifts For Jesus”----you may still do so up until January 15th. You can mail it (St. Matthew Church, 10383 Albion Road, North Royalton, 44133) Or just bring it to church---please carefully mark it. It is a way to thank the Lord for being a Himself a most special gift to us by giving Him a gift for His birthday. The gifts go for the ongoing work of the Lord at St. Matthew's.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS FOR LIFE AT ST. MATTHEW CHURCH---is going to begin quarterly meetings. Would those who have an interest in participating in these meetings please contact Cindy George at cindygeorge127@gmail.com

THANK YOU FOR HELPING THE NEEDY AT CHRISTMAS! *Sincere thanks to all who helped with our annual Food Boxes For Christmas reaching out to needy homes and folks in celebration of Christ's birth! 20 homes received the “full treatment”—box of food, ham (or other meat), grocery gift cards, and for those with children, gift cards for buying presents for the children. About another 10 homes or individuals, by their request received gift cards, but not boxes.*

Many helped in many ways---donating hams and other meat, donating many cards, delivering to homes, etc. And a special big “thank you” to Lisa Bowden and Louise Bouhasin for heading it all up! The next food box outreach will be in Holy Week.

OUR CHURCH FAMILY MEET-UP

Erin Musarra has been part of St. Matthew's for only two years, but she has already made a lasting impact on our community. She started a ministry that has helped, encouraged, and comforted so many people in such a short time. Martha Ministries is the name she chose for the group of parishioners who provide food to give to those who have just had a baby, or who have been recently stricken with an illness, or for those who have lost a loved one. What person in those situations doesn't appreciate a home cooked meal brought to their home!

Erin was born in the Pokonos Mountains of Pennsylvania on March 30, 1987. She was named Erin Brooke Prikryl. She had an older sister and eventually had some half-brothers. The family moved to Avon Lake, Ohio, when Erin was 2. Unfortunately, Erin's father was sick with a life-long alcohol and drug addiction problem. When Erin was 3, her parents divorced. Her mother and children moved to North Royalton where she eventually remarried.

The family started out being regular attenders of a Catholic church. But as time went on and the family got bigger, they cut down going to church to once or twice a year. At this time, church meant little to Erin.

After graduating from high school, Erin went to cosmetology school. She then started working at different jobs, only using her cosmetology skills in doing people's hair on the side. Shortly after finishing school, Erin got married and had her first child, Rowan. There were problems in this marriage and they ended up getting divorced.

Erin was still Catholic, but had pretty much fallen away from her faith. Then Mike Musarra reappeared back into her life. They had gone to high school together and she even went to the prom with him, but they then were not romantically involved. Now after her divorce, Mike started calling her to ask her on a date. She refused several times, but he persisted and she eventually agreed to go out with him. Mike had become Orthodox a couple of years before that. Erin decided she wanted to follow Mike's lead and on New Year's Eve, 2011, she also became Orthodox. They got married at Holy Trinity in Parma the following year. Nine months later, their daughter, Gianna, was born. Brooke followed 2 years later, and Daisy came 4 years after that.

When Erin converted to Orthodoxy, it was a sort of half-hearted conversion on her part. Her mind at that time was not exactly centered on God in the way it is today. However, that was soon to change.

In 2020, when Daisy was just 10 months old, Erin was diagnosed with cancer known as chondrosarcoma of the skull. She was having blurred vision and unrelenting migraine headaches. The cancer was pushing on her brain, but fortunately, did not grow into the brain. She would need surgery to remove the cancer. She remembers trying to prepare herself for something really bad. The surgery involved removing parts of the septal bone, the orbital bone, and a large part of the sinuses. The surgery was successful, but the recovery time was brutal with her having severe nerve pain in her face. It took a year for her to start feeling normal again. Now keep in mind, she had a baby to take care of during those months!

This experience changed and deepened her relationship with God. She said, "You don't take anything for granted anymore." She now appreciates to just be able to stay at home with her kids and to have the privilege of homeschooling them.

At this time, the family belonged to St. Michael the Archangel Orthodox Church. When COVID happened, it was hard on them to not be able to go to church for long periods of time. There were limitations on how many people could attend each Sunday and they ended up going to church once every several months. Erin tried to make the best of it so she decided to do a lot more things at home with her kids to make up for not being able to go to church. She read the Bible and Saint's stories to the kids. This ended up drawing her closer to God.

The Musarras live in Brunswick, not too far from the Blazeks who they had become acquainted with. The Blazeks invited them to visit St. Matthew's and they eventually decided to switch their membership there.

Erin has mostly recovered from her surgery but has a few challenges. For one, she completely lost her sense of smell. However, each Unction service at church that she attends, she miraculously is able to smell the incense. Just at that service--no other times! Also, she never thought she would be able to have more children. However, now she has just completed a pregnancy and feels an overwhelming sense of gratitude that God has allowed her to carry another baby. This baby was born on December 14, and they have given her the name, Eleni Elizabeth.

Erin's hobbies, when she has the time, are reading, politics, and being outside enjoying nature. Along with Martha's Ministry, she is also involved with OCLife and has volunteered at Zoe House in the past.

Erin's main goal in life is to raise her kids in the Faith and to be a good mother and example of what it looks like to be an active participant in the Faith. To stand up for her beliefs and not be afraid to do the right thing in a world of chaos.

St. Matthew's is blessed to add Erin, Mike, and children, to our church family.



THE FEAST OF THE THEOPHANY (EPIPHANY) OF JESUS CHRIST--JANUARY 6

This Feast Day is one of the very greatest of the Great Feasts! "Theophany" means a manifestation of God. The other name for it, "Epiphany", means in a more general way a "manifestation" or "appearance. On this day, we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus Christ by the Holy Baptizer John in the Jordan River as Christ began His public ministry. God manifested Himself in Christ very publicly that day.

The importance of this Holy Day is that for the first time the reality of the Holy Trinity was clearly revealed for all mankind to know and believe. When Jesus was baptized, a voice was heard from the heavens saying, "This is My Son in whom I am well pleased." The Father whose voice was heard is God. The white dove that was seen was a symbol of the Holy Spirit, who is God and who descended upon Christ, the Son of God. Thus, we have all 3 Persons of the Trinity--Father, Son, and Spirit--being revealed that day about 2000 years ago.

On this day, we have the traditional blessing of the waters. Since the waters of the Jordan River were blessed by the presence of Christ, the water we bless in the service is a source of divine grace and blessing to us. We, and our homes, get blessed with the holy water. And on the morning after the service of the Great Blessing of Water (January 5), on January 6th itself it is customary to bless an outdoor body of water. We will do that after the 10 a.m., January 6th liturgy at the lake just south of our property.

Thanks be to God for revealing Himself to us, for saving us, and for blessing us!

(Please see elsewhere in this bulletin for a schedule of all the services on January 5th and 6th)

**THE NEXT PROJECT OF OUR ST. JOHN THE ALMSGIVER MISSION WILL BE ON THE WEEKEND OF FEBRUARY 4TH. DETAILS SOON..... THIS TIME, IT WILL BE THE SERVING OF HOT MEALS----
--SO FOOD DONATIONS NOT NEEDED, BUT DONATIONS OF MONEY ARE. YOU CAN START MAKING DONATIONS NOW.....**

A FEW MORE CHRISTMAS THANK YOUS----

---To all who ran our annual Christmas program, all who participated, and all who helped in other ways!

---to Tom George for donating our parish Christmas tree....and for setting it up!

----and to all who decorated the tree!

Pakistan Orthodox children + Father John



Dear friends,

Greetings of Peace , Love and Joy !

God has been so gracious to us all by giving us the opportunity to celebrate the feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus . He is kind and merciful to lead us on the pathway to 2024 . Our words would not be sufficiently enough to thank Him for all His blessings . We are grateful for the gift of friends and well-wishers throughout the world .

The year 2023 made us experience the calamities of nature (floods and rains) , political miseries , Persecution of minorities ((burning of churches and houses of Christians at Jaranwala) and the Economical problems made life miserable for the poor and jobless people . We could not do much but we supported our community in a meager way .

After about 18 years we have been able to have the Urdu translation of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom compiled into a book shape .

We are thankful to God that PSB. Rosy is recovering from her sickness . It's all due to your prayers and again we thank you for this favour of love and concern .

Thank you dear friends for your contribution throughout the year . It's your deep love and concern which keeps us going . May the love of our Saviour fill your families with abundant blessings at this great feast and the year 2024 .

The Orthodox Mission is growing in thick and thin .

Please do remember us in your prayers and we do the same for you .

Have a joyful and blessed feast of Nativity .

May God bless you .

Gratefully yours,

Fr. John Tanveer and the Orthodox Community

**ST. MATTHEW'S HAS HAD THE BLESSING OF BEING ABLE TO FINANCIALLY SUPPORT THE PAKISTANI
ORTHODOX BELIEVERS FOR QUITE A FEW YEARS! MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS THEM!**

ST. MATTHEW ORTHODOX CHURCH

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